



Best Management Practices for Construction and Development Projects Western Foxsnake and Eastern Foxsnake

Common name • Western Foxsnake

Scientific name • *Pantherophis ramspotti*

Federal status • None

State status • None

Common name • Eastern Foxsnake

Scientific name • *Pantherophis vulpinus*

Federal status • None

State status • None

Purpose and Use

The information in this document is to be used to help avoid and minimize species impacts due to construction practices. It is not intended as a guide to manage habitat for a given species. Please contact the Department of Conservation if habitat management information is needed. Because every project and location differ, following the recommendations in this document does not guarantee impacts will not occur to the species and additional information may be required in certain instances. Following the recommendations in this document does not complete Endangered Species Act consultation that may be necessary for species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more information.

Ecology

Western and Eastern Foxsnakes are species of conservation concern that occur in northern Missouri, eastern Nebraska, southeastern South Dakota, east to northern Michigan and northwestern Indiana. In Missouri, Eastern Foxsnakes occur along the Mississippi River floodplain north from St. Louis. Western Foxsnakes occur in northwestern Missouri mainly along the Missouri River floodplain. This species is mainly an inhabitant of grasslands, scrub brush, and borders of woods and along edges of agriculture fields that adjoin wet prairies and marshes. Foxsnakes are active between early April and late October and overwinter in dens underbrush piles or burrows of mammals and crayfish. Mating begins in April, and females lay 8-27 eggs under logs, rotten stumps, or leaf litter in May or June. Young hatch in August or September. Foxsnakes are constrictors that prey mainly on rodents, and typically grow between 36 – 54 inches.

Reasons for Decline

At one time, it was presumed that Western Foxsnakes occurred throughout Missouri north of the Missouri River. Now, they are known only from several sites within the

state, especially wetlands within the Mississippi and Missouri rivers floodplains in northeastern and northwestern Missouri. Their decline may be due to a combination of factors, including human persecution, draining of wetlands, and loss of natural prairies for agriculture and urbanization projects.

Specific Recommendations

As do many reptiles, Foxsnakes play an important role in the food chain. They are a natural means of controlling rodent populations that can damage crops and other vegetation.

- Avoid removing or destroying unique habitat features, such as downed trees, logs and brush piles that provide habitat for Foxsnakes or their prey.
- Draining or destroying known wetland habitat should be avoided.
- Disposal of wastes and garbage should be done in designated areas far from wetlands.
- Avoid altering water levels in wetlands where Foxsnakes are present.
- Compaction and alteration of soil (vehicle and ATV use, disking, etc.) that directly impacts the species, or its habitat (mammal and crayfish burrows) should be avoided.
- Erosion and sediment controls should be strictly implemented, monitored, and maintained for the duration of the project to decrease sedimentation into wetlands and adjacent habitat.
- Use of net-like mesh fabrics (plastics, nylon, twine, etc.) for erosion control should be avoided due to entrapment and entanglement hazards.

General Recommendations

Refer to *Best Management Practices for Construction and Development Projects Affecting Missouri Rivers and Streams*.

If your project involves the use of Federal Highway Administration transportation funds, these recommendations may not fulfill all contract requirements. Please contact the Missouri Department of Transportation at 573-526-4778 or the [Missouri Department of Transportation Environmental Studies webpage](#) for additional information on recommendations.

Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in rivers and streams, contact:

For species information:

[Missouri Department of Conservation](#)

Science Branch
P.O. Box 180
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180
Telephone: 573-751-4115

For species information and Endangered Species Act Coordination:

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
Ecological Services
101 Park Deville Drive, Suite A
Columbia, MO 65203-0007
Telephone: 573-234-2132

For Clean Water Act Coordination:

[Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#)
Water Protection Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
Telephone: 573-751-1300, 800-361-4827

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)
Regulatory Branch
700 Federal Building
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896
Telephone: 816-389-3990

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)
EPA Region 7 Water Division
11201 Renner Boulevard
Lenexa, KS 66219
Telephone: 913-551-7977

Disclaimer

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from state and federal agencies, contractors, and others to provide guidance to those who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with these Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, and state or Local laws need to be considered for construction and development projects and require permits and/or consultation with the appropriate agency. Following the recommendations provided in this document will help reduce and avoid project impacts to the species, but impacts may still occur. Please contact the appropriate agency for further coordination and to complete compliance requirements.